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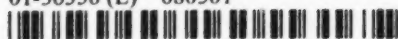
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Letter dated 3 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions of my Government, I have the honour to forward to you herewith a statement of response to the false allegations that were made by Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in a statement he delivered at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights at Geneva on 10 April 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the contents of the response of the Government of Uganda to the attention of the members of the Security Council and also to publish the same as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Semakula Kiwanuka
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 3 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Government of Uganda rejects in totality the contents of Olara Otunnu's presentation to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-seventh session at Geneva on 10 April 2001, in which he made a malicious and unfounded allegation that the Government of Uganda has a dark agenda against the Acholi, a people of northern Uganda where Mr. Otunnu comes from. The insinuation of genocide against the Acholi is without foundation, especially when it is made by a Ugandan who should know better.

Although Mr. Otunnu has been invited numerous times by the Government of Uganda to come and see for himself and although he, as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, has the obligation to visit countries where such children are, he refused to come to Uganda. That invitation still stands.

At Geneva on 10 April 2001 where he made unfounded allegations, Uganda's observer delegation to the Commission responded to the statement made by Mr. Otunnu and gave details of the efforts which the Government of Uganda has made to end the conflict in the northern region and save our children. The Government of Uganda would like to state the following:

1. Uganda is an original signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is fully committed to the implementation of the letter and spirit of the Convention.
2. The welfare of children, their upbringing, protection and security are of the utmost importance to and a priority of the Government of Uganda. Since 1986, the Lord's Resistance Army based in the Sudan has engaged in abductions and killings of children in northern Uganda. The Government has taken a number of steps to put an end to this gross violation of human rights and rights of children in northern Uganda.
3. The following are some of the efforts of the Government of Uganda to bring this tragic situation to an end:
4. Uganda signed a bilateral Agreement with the Sudan in Nairobi on 8 December 1999. As a result of the initiatives taken under that Agreement, 103 children have been returned and more are expected to return soon.
5. The Government, in collaboration with international and local agencies, has made efforts to rehabilitate and resettle those children who have been returned.
6. The Government has established an Amnesty Commission as a further step towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict in northern Uganda so as to save our children from abduction, torture and killings.
7. Between 28 March and 5 April 2001, a United Nations assessment mission visited the affected areas to carry out an independent assessment of the situation on the ground. The report of the mission was submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-seventh session by Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

8. Since 1986, the Government has highlighted the plight of the children in northern Uganda in various international forums with a view to getting international support for the resolution of the conflict and support for those affected by the conflict.

9. Mr. Otunnu is aware of the origins of the conflict in northern Uganda, in particular how and where the guns which have been used to abduct and kill innocent children were obtained.

In this regard, Uganda has consistently tabled a resolution in the Commission on Human Rights on the abduction of children from northern Uganda. This effort has resulted in positive responses from several international organizations such as UNICEF and UNHCR, and non-governmental organizations, which have been very helpful in the return and resettlement of some of the abducted children.

The Government of Uganda would like to reiterate that it will spare no effort to ensure the release of all the abducted children from captivity.

Finally, the Government of Uganda takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to those United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations which have persisted in assisting the Government of Uganda to secure the release of its abducted children. The Government of Uganda calls upon the Government of the Sudan to cooperate fully in this endeavour. In the same spirit, the Government of Uganda calls upon Olara Otunnu to use his office and mandate to ensure that the Lord's Resistance Army is denied support and ceases to abduct and enslave Uganda's children.